

Tomb Raider creator once so poor he lived in a van



LARA DOSH: Ian Livingstone with a busty Lara Croft lookalike

TOMB Raider lovely Lara Croft has made businessman Ian Livingstone £30 million.

And the company of the man once so poor he lived in a van yesterday topped the table of Britain's fastest-growing technology firms.

His game firm Eidos has grown 29,637 per cent in two years because of huge demand for Lara's computer adventures.

Now Ian, 47, who was brought up in the tough Rusholme area of Manchester, earns £1.5million a year in salary and bonuses.

The son of a sales rep, he lives in a mansion and has a fleet of motors and a yacht.

Fed-up Ian made it big after getting bored with his oil company job and trying to make cash from his hobby - playing board games.

He saw a magazine ad for a Dungeons and Dragons game by American inventor Gary Gygax, ordered four at £4 and sold them for 58.25 each.

Gygax thought Ian ran a huge games distribution company and gave him an exclusive sales deal for the whole of Europe.

Ian hid the truth, threw in his job and began sell-



■ **by DAVID PAUL**

ing games full-time from the dingy west London flat he shared with his school pal Steve Jackson.

But their landlady threw them out after getting fed up with all the mail arriving for the newly-created Games Workshop firm Ian and Steve had set up.

Sideline

They were so hard up they had to live in a cramped out van.

But by 1977 Ian and Steve had enough cash to open their first Games Workshop store in Hammer-smith, West London.

Fifteen years later they owned 36 shops with a money-spinning sideline -

interactive books. So far the books have sold 14 million copies in 23 languages.

Ian then invested in a computer games company called Demark, which in 1985 merged with Eidos.

In February 1996 he was visiting a Derby firm and saw a drawing of a big-breasted girl character called Riot Grrr.

Ian bought the company, changed the name to Lara Croft and created Tomb Raider - the world's most successful computer game.

He reckons Lara's success is easy to explain, saying: "What would you rather watch - some hairy-arsed scaffolder or the pert-bottomed, large-breasted Lara Croft?"

TYCOON'S £30m PAY STATION



A picture of delight

CINEMA worker Yvonne Wright is celebrating after winning £1.5m in the Lottery. Yvonne, 21, (above) of Gillingham, Kent, was at work on Saturday night when her brother Darren broke the news to her. Now Yvonne is planning to celebrate by flying off to New Zealand on holiday with her family.

Flaming good barbecue offers at Sainsbury's.

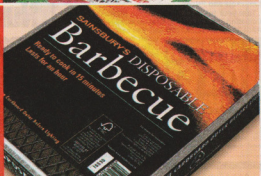
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